School of Theology at Claremont
1001 1364482

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE CHURCH IN THE MISSION FIELD

A Critical Dialogue

BY

ROLAND ALLEN

WORLD DOMINION PRESS
1, TUDOR STREET, LONDON, E.C. 4

Price 6d.

The Library

SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY
AT CLAREMONT

WEST FOOTHILL AT COLLEGE AVENUE
CLAREMONT, CALIFORNIA

007.52

INDIGENOUS CHURCH SERIES

THE Indigenous Church Series deals with the principles which should govern all efforts to plant the Christian Church in the various countries of the world.

THOMAS COCHRANE, *Editor.*

BV
2063
A4

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE CHURCH IN THE MISSION FIELD

A Critical Dialogue

BY

ROLAND ALLEN, M.A.

Author of *Missionary Methods: St. Paul's or Ours, Educational Principles and Missionary Methods, Voluntary Clergy, etc.*

2063
A4

WORLD DOMINION

Editor: THOMAS COCHRANE, M.B., C.M.

Issued Quarterly 1/-, post paid 1/2 *Annual Subscription 4/6, post paid*

WORLD DOMINION, with its International Outlook, is creating for itself an ever-growing Constituency among those in every land who are thoughtfully pondering the World Situation as viewed from the standpoint of the Kingdom of God. Many who are responsible for policy and administration in Christian work, are confessedly being influenced by its distinctive Message and the information which it contains.

The Great Objective of the Magazine is World Survey with a view to World Evangelization and the Creation of Indigenous Churches. In the pursuit of this objective WORLD DOMINION touches every phase of life, and its readers will be brought into touch with the inner situation in the various countries of the World.

A few Extracts from a mass of appreciative comments

THE PRESS

" The magazine is well called ' international.' It is full of interesting things."—*British Weekly.*

" I want to express my interest in . . . WORLD DOMINION . . . it shows a grasp of the World Situation which will be of special value to those who are privileged to see it."—DELAVEN L. PIERSON, Editor, *Missionary Review of the World.*

" Its pages are filled with . . . notes . . . and articles . . . all of a high standard."—*Church Missionary Review.*

" Amongst the many publications which come . . . from the home and foreign fields, there is none which is aiming at exactly the same goal as WORLD DOMINION."—*Life of Faith.*

" This Review is of extraordinary interest . . . should command the complete confidence of the Christian community."—*Christian.*

" There is a fine spirit and a wide outlook in WORLD DOMINION."—*Sunday School Times.*

" Do you ever see this Quarterly ? It is one of the most interesting and instructive magazines on the market. . . . If you want to become thoroughly up-to-date on the world movements to-day you ought to become a regular subscriber."—*Scottish Congregationalist.*

" Occupies a place of its own."—*Methodist Times.*

" Continues to increase in interest and value. No one keen on foreign missions should fail to see it."—*Congregational Quarterly.*

CLERGYMEN AND MINISTERS

" It is excellent, most excellent."

" WORLD DOMINION is splendid. The articles are most interesting and stimulating."

" Permit me to say how much I like WORLD DOMINION; it fills a gap in my outlook on missionary matters and helps me to a better understanding of the forces at work in other lands."

" My first thought was ' another magazine ! ' but I have been reading it and cordially welcome it . . . it clearly has a vision and can express its message."

" I greatly enjoy your magazine. It is too good to live and far too honest to pay ! I have not read anything so thought provoking for some little time."

" I have learnt to value the magazine for its inherent interest and freshness. You are justified in claiming a new presentation of the Mission Field problem, and I believe sincerely that you are on the right lines. Our General Secretary . . . has been so favourably impressed that our missionaries in India have had a Conference in which the problems as suggested by you have been seriously considered."

" It is very gratifying . . . to see so many references to WORLD DOMINION . . . in periodicals."

MISSION SECRETARIES

" I would like to say . . . that no magazine comes to my desk that is more helpful to me than WORLD DOMINION. I always find it suggestive."

Deeply sympathetic . . . with your work in WORLD DOMINION. I am glad of the line you are taking . . . and trust that the influence of the Review may be far-reaching."

" May I express my appreciation of your splendid magazine, WORLD DOMINION; it is one of the best coming to this office."

" I have come to appreciate WORLD DOMINION more and more . . . a good many missionary magazines and papers come to my table, but WORLD DOMINION has a personality of its own, which is very helpful, in addition to the information which it gives."

" It is most interesting and highly suggestive. I should like to see a copy placed in the hands of all the clergy and ministers in the country, all the officials of the Missionary Societies and their Committees—particularly in the hands of all our students, medical and divinity."

THE PUBLIC AND THE MISSIONARY

" My very hearty congratulations on WORLD DOMINION. I think it is admirable."

" I want to congratulate you on WORLD DOMINION. I have read it from cover to cover with great interest and delight, and the contents should appeal to all laymen."

" I am reading WORLD DOMINION with a great deal of interest. You have struck the key note; you have the real vision."

" Keep turning out as useful stuff in the future as has recently appeared in WORLD DOMINION. It is top-notch and should be read by every Christian layman. I am urging it upon all I meet here."

" Your valuable literature has been an eye-opener to me. I hope someone with means will help to get it into the hands of every leader and into the hands of every missionary in the world."

The Establishment of the Church in the Mission Field

I.

ONE of the visitors to the office of WORLD DOMINION was discussing an article on the subject of the organization of the local Church, in which it was suggested that the local Church ought to be a "Church," and not a mere congregation of Christians, and that it ought as a Church to be fully equipped to propagate itself. The writer of the article maintained that such was the Apostolic practice, and that the use of the term "indigenous" by modern missionaries ought properly to involve the same practice. The visitor said that he saw, and in theory admitted, the argument, but that the practice to-day was not possible, because the risks involved were too great. "I should not," he said, "be afraid of the indigenous Churches which I myself might establish; I should be very much afraid of the Churches which they might establish."

A.—Ought you not rather to say that you are afraid of establishing any indigenous Church? Does not the term indigenous essentially mean self-propagating in the country? If you are afraid of the Churches which your indigenous Church might establish, is not that the same thing as saying that you are afraid of an indigenous Church, whether planted by you, or by anyone else?

V.—I am not afraid of the Church becoming indigenous in the sense that the central committees at Headquarters might become wholly native and might direct the propagation of the faith throughout the country; I am afraid of an indigenous Church which might be indigenous in the sense that the little owl is becoming indigenous in England, each couple propagating its species. That is what I am afraid of.

A.—But is not that exactly what the writer whose article you are discussing said was the Apostolic conception of the Church; One Church universal, composed of Churches each fully equipped and each propagating itself; and is not that exactly what the term indigenous ought to mean?

V.—What I said was that I am afraid of the Churches which they might establish, and that is what I meant.

A.—But you are not afraid of the sort of Churches which men educated and trained to sit on Central Committees and to direct a great organisation might establish. You said that, didn't you ?

V.—Yes, I said that.

A.—You remember that in the Wisdom of Solomon it is said that fear is " nothing else than the surrender of the succours which reason offereth," and that in his Apology Socrates argued that men's fear of death was that sort of fear. Are you sure that you are not giving way to a mere instinctive terror ; are you sure that your fear on the one side and your confidence on the other are well grounded ?

V.—Certainly I am.

A.—Are the grounds of the fear on the one side and of the confidence on the other closely related ? I mean that what causes you to fear the self-propagation of local Churches is absent in the case of the Central Committees ; it is the presence or absence of the same factors which cause the fear or the confidence.

V.—That's right. The ignorance and inexperience of the local Churches causes my fear; the Central Committees would be formed of educated and experienced men, before any great powers were entrusted to them.

A.—Good. May I examine these grounds of fear and confidence ?

V.—I don't mind ; but they are perfectly obvious, and you will not easily shake them.

A.—Well, if I fail, the time will not be wasted ; for I have long been troubled by a suspicion which will not leave me that this fear is not so well grounded as men commonly suppose, and that this confidence is not so well grounded as they imagine, and consequently that the results of our action in the Mission Field may be disastrous ; and if you can reassure me, I shall be very grateful.

V.—Go ahead. You need not make such a palaver about it. You will soon see how well grounded my fear and my confidence is.

A.—May I first enquire a little more precisely what it is that you fear ? You say that you are afraid of the

Churches which Churches established by you fully equipped to propagate their like might establish. What do you mean ? What are you afraid of ?

V.—I mean that in establishing other Churches they might tolerate a laxity in morality (polygamy, for instance), or a laxity in religious belief (ancestral worship or idolatrous customs, or vague theistic doctrines), so that in a few generations the Christianity of the Churches might be little better than heathenism and hardly to be distinguished from it. Now as long as we have control we can see that a proper standard of morals and a proper standard of doctrine is maintained.

A.—You are surely saying that the Churches of your foundation would propagate not their like, but something unlike themselves. Is that natural ?

V.—We are not talking of owls or rabbits, but of Churches, and they are very different. Did I not tell you that the ground of my fear was the ignorance of the Christians. They do not know much of Christianity themselves, and they would not know the danger or how to meet it, and so they would not be sufficiently careful. That is the trouble.

A.—Do you mean that they would tolerate what they knew to be wrong ?

V.—No. They would not see that it is wrong.

A.—How is that ? Have you not taught them ?

V.—I have taught them all right, but they might not hand on what I have taught them.

A.—Why not ? If they would not hand it on, it must be either because they have a secret desire to escape from it, or because they have never really understood it. If they knew your teaching and found in it the way of salvation for themselves, surely they would hand on that and nothing else.

V.—They have not grasped it. They accept much of it, possibly because I, and missionaries like me, whom they trust, tell it them ; but they have not made it their own. Consequently they would tolerate many things which we cannot tolerate. That is why we must keep hold of them and direct them till they are established in the faith.

A.—I understand. But is it your fear that this would be universally the case, or that it would happen in some Churches and not in others, or, again, that the Churches would be divided, some members holding fast and others desiring an easier rule of faith and life? Think of the Christian congregations as you know them, and tell me which of these you are afraid of. Suppose the Churches locally established and propagating themselves, what do you think would happen? Would all alike succumb to this evil, or would there be some eager for change and some to maintain stoutly the standard of life and faith which they have been taught?

V.—I do not like to prophesy, and I do not think that it makes much difference. In either case the results would be disastrous.

A.—It makes no small difference which of those alternatives you contemplate. The Apostle St. Paul, for instance, contemplated divisions in the Church on matters of doctrine and practice, but he did not contemplate the apostasy of the whole Church. The fear of divisions did not hinder him from establishing Churches fully equipped to propagate themselves, because he was assured that the truth of Christ would prevail in the end. But if we contemplate the apostasy of the whole Church in the country, then we are in bondage to a fear from which he was free, a fear which might indeed hinder us from establishing Churches. I want to know what this fear of yours really is, so please tell me which of these you fear.

V.—I cannot imagine all the Christians, or even all the Churches, deliberately abandoning our teaching. I have indeed sometimes noticed that native Christians are extremely sticklish when they think some doctrine or practice which they have learnt is being threatened. They say that the new teaching was not what they were taught, and think that settles the question. No, I do not think all would succumb, but there would be division, and possibly strife.

A.—Strife and division is then what you fear?

V.—Yes.

A.—And what is your confidence in the Headquarters'

Staff? That body would be composed of educated and experienced men.

V.—Yes. Otherwise we should not hand over the control to them.

A.—There is no such Committee to-day, is there?

V.—No, not yet; but year by year men are being educated and learning experience, and as time goes on we shall hand over more and more of the responsibility to them.

A.—The responsibility for establishing new Churches?

V.—Yes, no doubt that in time, but the time is not yet. At present that responsibility rests largely upon us. The Mission as a matter of fact generally takes charge of new work, and only hands over to the Committees work which is fairly well established.

A.—I understand. And the Headquarters' Committee is composed of men who have either had a college training or are pastors of repute?

V.—At present it is a mixed body on which foreign missionary leaders and native Church leaders sit together.

A.—And your expectation is that in due time the foreigners will all be superseded by native Church leaders?

V.—Yes, that is what we all look forward to.

A.—From what source will these new members be recruited?

V.—From the young men whom we are now training year by year.

A.—And are the young men trained in the colleges keen evangelists, who will look upon the multiplication of the local Churches as the matter of first importance?

V.—As far as I can see, they generally seem much more keen on getting control of all Church finance and organization. What they seem generally to want is to be in the positions formerly occupied by foreigners, whether as heads of schools or colleges, or as pastors of districts where there are many congregations.

A.—But, no doubt, when the whole responsibility for the Church in the country is handed over to them, they will be seen to be enthusiastic evangelists, and will lead the congregations in a great evangelistic movement, and will organize a great advance.

V.—I doubt it myself. Look at the situation. The Christians as a whole now expect evangelistic movements to be led by the Mission. They nearly always want jogging and directing to do any evangelistic work. They commonly wait for the paid evangelists or for the Mission to move ; they seem to think that it is their business. I have heard men say that it is not so everywhere, but it is certainly commonly the case with us. That is one of the reasons why we must be always at hand to urge the Church on.

A.—Is that so ? It hardly seems natural. I remember being told that when the missionaries were all driven out of Madagascar they found on their return far more Christians than they left, in spite of the persecution which raged in their absence. I heard something of the same sort in China at the time of the Boxer rising in 1900 ; and only the other day the Bishop of Lagos told us that the great advance of recent years was due in the main to the unpaid efforts of individual Christians. I should have thought that that was the normal thing, and what we should naturally expect. But if what you say is true to any wide extent, and is not a purely local condition, it throws a lurid light upon the establishment of an indigenous Church by devolution of authority to a native committee at Headquarters ; for the local congregations would surely wait for the Central Committee to act and to send paid evangelists, just as they now wait for the Mission to act.

V.—That is what I expect.

A.—Then would not the surrender of the present position of the foreign directors at Headquarters to highly trained natives, be nothing better than the handing over of Church control to a small body of active and energetic men who want to run the Church in the place of the foreigners, but really do not represent the local congregations, and are no more in touch with them than the foreign missionaries, and, as a body, have really not done as much evangelistic work as the foreign missionaries whom they would supplant ?

V.—I have often suspected that that is what would happen. The men who are most eager to slip into the positions held by the foreign missionary leaders are college-trained

students and organizers. I have often suspected that they would begin by constructing a paper constitution for the Church of what they thought a native type, and making it native mainly by casting off as much as possible of what their Western teachers had taught them. I have often suspected that, but I have never liked to say it. And as for evangelism, they would rather sit at Headquarters and organize it than actively labour at it. At least that is what most of them seem to do now, though there are a few really keen evangelists, and they might save the situation. But as for the local congregations, I suppose they would be very much what they are now. Changes at Headquarters would not suddenly make them zealous evangelists; and, as I said, where I am, the congregations generally would leave the work to paid agents, whoever sat at Headquarters.

A.—Then your confidence in the devolution of control to a native Headquarters' Staff is simply that such a body would maintain a proper standard of morals and doctrine, not that it would create a strong evangelistic society, and would lead a great advance.

V.—Of course I cannot say that it would not, but I do not see any reason at present to expect it. You see our idea of leadership is almost wholly confined to the direction of organization, and we train all our young college students with that idea before us. Consequently it is not unnatural that they should look upon the higher positions in Church and scholastic organization as the positions to be coveted. And when men get absorbed in the routine of an office or of a headmastership, there is little time or opportunity for practical evangelism; and, moreover, a man who goes out into the wilds as an evangelist and stays there and is not seen or heard on Committees at Headquarters, is not considered very highly as a leader. If a man can combine evangelistic tours with the presidency of a Committee, that is considered admirable; but even then he must go on his tours as a "big bug," to use a vulgar expression, and have great meetings organized for him, if he is to be considered anybody. He makes great speeches, and is reported, but he does not get into intimate touch with the humdrum, every-day difficulties of the local

Churches. It is all quite natural; but it is not the way to create evangelistic Churches full of zeal for the conversion of their neighbours, and that, after all, is the way of steady and rapid advance. If the Christians, foreign and native alike, all held in the highest honour the men who did not build on another's foundation, but were always pressing out and beyond, it would be different; but as it is, the ablest men naturally look to receive the most honoured and best paid posts, and those are at Headquarters in offices, or in charge of large city congregations or of districts where there are many Christians, or in colleges and high schools. I am not blaming them. It could hardly be otherwise.

A.—Well, now I understand your fear and your confidence. But let me ask one more question before we speak of the grounds for that fear and that confidence. When you spoke of establishing Churches fully equipped to propagate themselves, you seemed to be thinking of that action as likely to result in a sudden and rapid advance, as if they would quickly establish a great number of Churches. Was that so?

V.—Yes, it was. I was thinking that they might establish Churches like themselves very rapidly.

A.—Why did you think like that? Why should the establishment of local Churches fully equipped to propagate themselves produce any such result?

V.—I hardly know why; but I feel at once the danger of rapid expansion. It may be because I feel in my bones that if local Churches could establish local Churches, the Churches would be obviously native, and men would be more ready to enter them; and if native Churches could establish fully equipped Churches, so soon as they found that out, there would be a new zest in life, and they would begin to want to use their powers. Don't you think they would?

A.—I do. But would it be a bad thing if they did?

V.—It looks good outside; but in practice it would lead to the establishment of a lot of rotten churches, and the whole movement would get hopelessly out of hand.

A.—Out of whose hand?

V.—Out of ours. It is our business to guide and control until some native Headquarters' Staff can take over the control from us.

A.—Well, now I understand your fear, and your confidence, and your conception of the duty of the foreign missionaries. Now let us consider the grounds of each. The way of future security for doctrine and morals in the future lies in the control of a well-educated native Committee, and the way for the present lies in the control of the foreign missionaries. That is what you mean, is it not ?

V.—Pretty nearly. As I said, the danger of the local Church plan lies in ignorance and inexperience.

A.—And the danger of the highly educated staff plan lies in self-centred sterility ?

V.—I did not say that.

A.—Didn't you ? I thought that you told me that the highly educated and trained directors of an organization were apt to get immersed in the machinery.

V.—So I did, but I did not mean what you now say.

A.—What, then, did you mean ?

V.—Look here, my friend, you are always on the point of questioning the grounds of my fear and always wandering off the point. Do get on.

A.—I will not keep you long, I have only three points to discuss. I am not going to dispute whether the present congregations are less well educated than we might desire, nor whether the college students are less well educated than I might desire. I want to enquire whether college education is really the safeguard which you fancy, and whether ignorance is really so great a danger as you suggest.

V.—What are your three points ? That is what I have been waiting to hear all this time.

A.—Have you not observed that ignorance is not so dangerous to the faith of Christ as learning ? Have not all the dangerous heresies sprung up among the learned, or those who thought themselves so, the clever, trained, educated men ? And is there not to-day a much greater danger that men trained in our colleges, if they were moved by some passion, might cast away fundamental doctrines,

or compromise with non-Christian philosophy or custom, than the leaders of local Churches who were busily engaged in extending the Church, and in learning how to manage their local church organization ?

V.—There is something in that ; but you presuppose some passion, and the leaders to whom we should delegate the direction of the Church would be men trained and educated by us, and well established in the faith.

A.—Are you quite sure that there would be no passion to stir them and to pervert their judgment ?

V.—What passion ? What cause is there for passion ?

A.—That is my second point. I think that there is such a cause. You know that the Church is now generally called " Foreign," whatever we may say about it, and whatever titles we may give to Central Committees.

V.—Yes.

A.—You know that many of the young men educated in our colleges are to-day very impatient and eager to make the Christian Church native.

V.—Yes.

A.—Well, then, I do not ask you whether there would be, I ask you whether there is not now, some reason for fear. Your fear of the indigenous Churches is all hypothetical, and of something which might happen; my fear is present, of something which is happening. In your experience, is it not the college-trained youth who is now impatient of foreign control, and is now moved by a nationalistic feeling which is passion, and is opposed to foreign teaching.

V.—No doubt there is a considerable body of such men.

A.—And are not these the men who to-day talk of abandoning Western creeds and Western Church customs ?

V.—Some of them do.

A.—And do they not talk of an eclectic creed, which will incorporate all the best teaching of their national religious teachers, and do they not talk of conserving national customs in the Church ?

V.—A few of them do that, too.

A.—Only a few ?

V.—Well, outside the ministry and the directing Committees, I have heard that such talk is pretty common.

A.—And inside the Committees and the Pastorate, are there not some of the abler men who rather sympathize with that attitude ?

V.—There may be one or two.

A.—And are they considered able men, and well educated ?

V.—One or two of them are, undoubtedly.

A.—Then I put it to you. Suppose that Native Headquarters' directory or Committee in which you trust was wholly composed of natives, would it not be liable to be influenced by this passion in this direction ? I mean might it not be in some danger of casting aside fundamental Christian doctrine, and compromising with non-Christian native custom, and non-Christian, vague, theistic doctrine, in order to demonstrate that it was really native and free from foreign direction ?

V.—I cannot deny that there might be some such danger. I have said it myself.

A.—I am not putting up an imaginary danger ?

V.—No ; it is more than that, or I should not have said it myself.

A.—But suppose that this party, which is recruited from the most intellectual and most highly educated Christians, in a few years' time won a position of considerable influence on the Native Church Committees. Is that an unreasonable supposition ?

V.—No, it is not unreasonable ; but it would take time.

A.—Suppose it happened. That Central Committee would represent the whole Church in the country, would it not ?

V.—Yes, of course.

A.—Then the whole Church would be involved ?

V.—I suppose it would. But there would be a minority which would not be misled.

A.—Then we are precisely where we were when we were talking of the possibility of local Churches compromising with heathen customs and ideas, namely, that the

danger is either total apostasy or division; and either disastrous?

V.—It looks like it.

A.—But is there not also a great difference? Suppose a local Church compromised in that fashion, the whole Church in the country would not be involved, and the other Churches which stood fast could deal with the erring. The evil would be distributed. But if the Headquarters' Committee compromised, the whole Church which it represented throughout the country would be involved with it, and there would be no one to deal with it except the individual members who refused to follow their leaders. Does not that make a great difference?

V.—Yes, I suppose it does; because if a local Church here and there went astray, we in England could advise and help the main body of the faithful to rectify the evil. But if the Headquarters' Committee went astray they would break communion with us, or we with them. It would be a great schism.

A.—Greater and more serious than our present divisions?

V.—Far more serious, for we should then be up against the whole constituted order in the country.

A.—But is there not another great difference in the two cases. In the movement which we have just been discussing, the motive, the passion, was national feeling and revolt against foreign control. That was the real cause to which we assigned the compromise with non-Christian customs and ideas, was it not?

V.—Yes.

A.—But how could that operate if we began by establishing the Churches, equipped with full powers to conduct their own affairs and to propagate themselves? That root of bitterness would be removed. If the root of bitterness is removed, does that make no difference?

V.—It would make a difference; but some of those Churches might still want to make the Church appear native by casting aside truth and customs received from us.

A.—Fundamental truths? Would it not be more often customs dear to us, but not really fundamental?

V.—I cannot say.

A.—But we can say that the great incentive to cast aside our teaching would be gone because the Churches would obviously and manifestly not be under our control.

V.—But that is the danger. They would not be under our control.

A.—No. The danger is that our control inevitably ends in bitterness and revolt. But there is another great difference between the two cases.

V.—What is that ?

A.—In your experience, what sort of men are most eager to propagate the faith of Christ, and most successful in doing it ? Are they men who are most eager to cast away our teaching, or are they the men who are least of all likely, or inclined, to abandon what they have been taught ?

V.—In my experience, the men who are most eager to evangelize others are generally simple-minded men who have found in Christ a hope and a power which to them is beyond all price, and they want others to share it.

A.—But do they tend to compromise with heathenism ?

V.—Not at all. They are very definitely Christian, and sometimes tend to speak, as I think, too fiercely against what they call the vanity of the popular superstition.

A.—Eagerness to propagate their new faith does not then make them careless in matters of doctrine and practice ?

V.—No ; they generally teach what they have been taught themselves, and nothing else.

A.—I remember to have heard of Christians in Africa who converted a very large number of their fellow tribesmen and in fact so far as in them lay established a large Church, of the very existence of which the missionaries were long ignorant ; but I did not hear that they were compromising with heathenism or indistinguishable from heathen. Have you ever met anything like that ?

V.—No, I cannot say that I have ; but I am not surprised. What could such men teach except what they had learnt themselves ?

A.—But when college-trained students talk of establishing a native Church, do they not want to express their freedom from foreign influence by making changes for the sake of change, deviating deliberately from what they have been taught for that very purpose, even when they find it hard to express what objection they have to the doctrine or practice which they want to change? A missionary from China the other day was telling me that in the recent disturbances students who were supported in the Mission School by Mission funds were loudest in their cries of "Kill the foreigners," and that he thought that the explanation was, not that they hated their teachers, but that they had been twitted with being dependent upon foreigners, and so they seized this opportunity of expressing their freedom. Is it not possible that these college-trained men seek to express a religious freedom which they covet by proclaiming their eagerness to abandon some doctrine or practice which they have been taught, just in the same way?

V.—It is quite possible.

A.—And is it not proverbial that missionary activity is the best antidote for unrest and unprofitable disputes in the Church?

V.—I have often urged that upon my people at home and abroad.

A.—And did you not say that you felt in your bones that the equipment of Churches to propagate themselves would result in missionary activity?

V.—Yes, I said that.

A.—Then is there not here a very important distinction between the two methods of establishing an indigenous Church which we are discussing, and is not the balance wholly in favour of the local Churches?

V.—I cannot say. I tell you I am afraid of the sort of Churches which they would establish.

A.—Well, there is still my third point. Let us turn to that. And again I will appeal to your experience. Have you not observed that in the beginning new converts, especially those who are possessed with a fervent evangelistic spirit, are eager and ready to learn and very

conscious of their ignorance and inexperience, and ready to accept help ?

V.—That is very true.

A.—And have you not observed that the college-trained man who is eager to step into the foreign missionary's position is not quite so teachable, or so ready to recognize his own inexperience ?

V.—That is true, too.

A.—Then may I not say that the local Churches, whether singly, or as a whole, would be far more ready to welcome guidance and help than a Central Committee composed almost entirely of college-trained men ?

V.—Possibly. But I do not feel certain about that.

A.—But you do know that so far as we have any experience, the men who now do most to convert their fellows are not unwilling to be guided and helped by men who will guide and help without trying to govern and control.

V.—I have said that.

A.—Then at least we are certain in the one case ; if there is any uncertainty, it is in the other. Then why should we imagine the local Churches establishing Churches all over the country as though they were to be instantly isolated from all help and guidance from their founders ? Have not all the examples of Churches oppressed with superstition and cursed with a low standard of morals and education been instances of Churches cut off from free communication with others, isolated, lying as one might say in backwaters, apart from the main stream ? And why should the Churches of our foundation be in that case ? Would they not be the children of the most free and enlightened Churches in the world ? Then why should they refuse to receive help from the experience of their parents when the terror and reproach of foreign domination was removed ? Are you not thinking of the Churches establishing other Churches as if there were no longer any experienced missionaries left to help them, and as if they were cut off from all communication with others, and is not this a large element in your fear ?

V.—It is. I do not see how missionaries could keep

pace with the work; I do not see how they could make sure that the new converts were properly taught; I do not see how they could make sure that a proper standard of doctrine and practice was maintained in all the Churches. I tell you the movement would get out of hand in no time, and there would be Churches all over the country which would be little better than heathen.

A.—Then we must control and govern the Churches to maintain that standard?

V.—Of course we must. We are sent to control and we must control. We cannot abandon our responsibility to the immature. Meanwhile Educate, Educate, Educate, should be our slogan.

A.—Educate for what?

V.—Educate to direct their own Church life.

A.—When?

V.—When they are established in the faith.

A.—When will that be?

V.—Who knows, not in my day.

A.—And then?

V.—Why then the foreigner will retire and leave all direction in their hands.

A.—And how will it be known when that day has come?

V.—There will be no difficulty about that. Little by little we shall hand over more and more responsibility to the native leaders whom we have trained.

A.—And will the native leaders always agree with you about the exact amount of responsibility which they can bear at any given moment?

V.—I hope so.

A.—Suppose they want more than you feel it wise to give?

V.—We shall not give it.

A.—What will they do? Accept your decision quietly or revolt?

V.—We must leave the future in God's hands. All that we can do is to act as wisely as possible in our own day.

II.

A.—I wonder whether the Bible throws any light on the problem. It might help us to decide what it is wise for us to do. The Apostle St. Paul, for instance, had to meet this question, and his example and practice might afford some guidance. Have you ever looked at his work from this point of view?

V.—Of course I have. I know perfectly well that St. Paul established Churches just as you seem to want us to do; but it cannot be done to-day. Some years ago the same man whose article we were discussing at the beginning, wrote a book on St. Paul's missionary method, and plenty of people pointed out at once that the conditions to-day are utterly different from those which obtained in St. Paul's day, and that consequently you cannot argue from his action. I never heard that he made any answer to that.

A.—Shall we consider the matter now?

V.—If you like.

A.—Where shall we begin? Were there any people in the Christian Church in St. Paul's day who argued that missions to the heathen ought to be conducted on the same principles which you were maintaining, and for the same reasons?

V.—Not that I know of.

A.—Were there not people who followed St. Paul wherever he went, arguing that Gentile converts must be compelled to keep the law?

V.—Oh, you mean the Judaizing party! Of course they did that.

A.—Why did they do that?

V.—Because they wanted the Jew to be top dog in the Church, and the Christian Church to be Jewish throughout, and the converts from the heathen to be admitted only on sufferance, and in so far as they followed Jewish rules of life, as a species of proselyte.

A.—Is that what they said?

V.—No, of course they did not put it like that. They said the converts from heathenism could not be saved

unless they were circumcised and kept the law. But it amounted to what I said. That would have been the result ; and any fool could see it.

A.—Do you think those "certain which came from James" were men who were consciously seeking nothing but to maintain the predominance of the Jews in the Church ? Do you think that all those who followed them were doing that ?

V.—I should think they probably were. Anyhow, they were bitter opponents of the policy of St. Paul which set the Gentiles free.

A.—Was not St. Peter at one time inclined to think that they were right ?

V.—Yes, that is true.

A.—And Barnabas also ?

V.—Yes.

A.—And do you think those two men were ready to adopt a policy of which the obvious meaning was nothing but Jewish predominance in the Church ?

V.—No. I should not like to say that. St. Peter had gone to the house of Cornelius, and Barnabas had been on a missionary journey with St. Paul. I think that they must have had some reason for believing that it was better for the whole body of Christians, Gentiles as well as Jews, that all should be circumcised and keep the law.

A.—Do you think that the Galatian and Macedonian converts of St. Paul were in danger of being led astray by an appeal which obviously meant nothing but Jewish domination in the Church ?

V.—That seems hardly likely. They must have had some more plausible reason to give.

A.—What reason could they have given ? What sort of argument could they have used ?

V.—I do not quite know. All that we are told is that they laid down the law and said that the Gentiles could not be saved unless they kept it.

A.—That sounds as if they were, at least professedly, anxious about the salvation of the Gentiles. Perhaps they really were anxious. They might well have been anxious ; they might well have believed sincerely that

St. Paul was leading his converts along a very dangerous path and forsaking the way of Christ in telling them that they need not keep the law. Before the Jerusalem council they might have sincerely believed that all the Apostles would agree with them, and after the council they might have sincerely believed that they were right. But they must have used some argument to maintain that position. You yourself said that they must have had some reason to give for their belief.

V.—I am certain that they had some reason.

A.—Well, what was it? There are some obvious arguments which they might have used. They might have said, for instance, that Jesus was a Jew and kept the law, and that men who wished to be saved must follow Him in this.

V.—They might certainly have said that.

A.—And did not Jesus say, "One jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled"? And did not He tell His disciples, "The Scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat: all therefore, whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do"? Might not these people have argued that Christ the Saviour told His disciples to keep the law?

V.—They might. It sounds a strong argument.

A.—Might they not then have said that the Jewish law was the Christian law, and must be maintained by Christians?

V.—I suppose they might.

A.—And might they not have said that if heathen Gentiles were not bound by that law the moral standard of the Church would be no better than heathen?

V.—Well, it is clear from his Epistles that even St. Paul himself was anxious about the moral standard of the Gentile Churches; and that they gave him good cause to be anxious.

A.—And might they not have argued that if Gentiles lived in heathen cities and were not bound by the law, the Church would certainly be contaminated with heathen ideas of God, and be compromised by compliance with idolatrous customs?

V.—I do not know whether they said anything about these things; but I imagine all men would see that strict adherence to the law involved a strict adherence to the idea of God as One and Holy, and would be a great safeguard against the inroads of heathen conceptions of God, polytheism and idolatry.

A.—They might have said so?

V.—They certainly might have said so. It would have been a powerful argument.

A.—Anyhow, they acted as if they believed it; I suppose I may say that?

V.—Yes, you may say that.

A.—And is it not more reasonable to suppose that men who plainly had great influence in the Church were honest men and used good arguments, even if their hatred and fear of St. Paul's doctrine and practice drove them to seek his life, than that they were men who openly and confessedly were fighting for nothing but domination over the Gentile Churches? Which do you believe?

V.—I believe that they really were afraid that if St. Paul's doctrine of freedom from the law won the day all those evils which you suggested must follow. It seems so perfectly obvious.

A.—Then they shared the fears which you expressed. They in their day and you in yours have felt the same fear, and the same need for a stout maintenance of a standard of morals and doctrine. There is, then, some likeness between the conditions in St. Paul's day and in ours.

V.—Well, as far as that goes, there is a resemblance; but I think it ends there. The danger was not so great, because St. Paul could always establish his Churches with a nucleus of men, Jews and God-fearing Greeks, who really knew the discipline of the law. Now we have nothing of the kind; and that makes so great a difference that it breaks down all argument from St. Paul's action.

A.—Let us consider that. What you are saying is that St. Paul made converts from the synagogue, Jews and God-fearing Greeks, men who had been trained under the discipline of the law, and therefore he could rely upon

them to maintain the Christian standard of doctrine and morals. Is that right?

V.—Yes, that is what I said.

A.—And if we had men like that in the Churches to-day we could follow his example. Is that right?

V.—Yes; no doubt that would be true.

A.—Well, then, let us enquire first whether the converts from the synagogue had such influence in the Church that there really was no danger in those days. Did not St. Paul write to the Thessalonians as though they had heard of one God living and true from him first?

V.—Yes, that is true.

A.—And does he not write to the Corinthians of the right attitude of Christians to polytheism and to idolatry and idolatrous feasts?

V.—He does.

A.—Why should he do that? If the Pauline Churches were really guided by men who had forsaken that sort of error long before he preached to them, if they were not in danger of falling into compromise with heathen ideas of God and heathen immorality, why should he write like that? Was the whole thing a delusion, and was there really no danger at all of the Church going astray?

V.—No doubt many of the converts were from the heathen outside the synagogue, and they needed this exhortation.

A.—But still the nucleus was there, the well-taught, established Jewish converts and proselytes, and there was no fear of the Church as a whole going astray. Did not you say that? Didn't you say that St. Paul's Churches were guided by these men and therefore he could rely upon them to keep the Church straight? Was not that the difference between his work and ours which made the imitation of his missionary practice impossible to-day?

V.—Yes, that is true.

A.—Then why did they not do their work? Why did they not settle the question? You said that they were the men who saved the Church from any danger of compromise with heathen customs and ideas, didn't you? Were these Churches really being led by the men upon whom you stake

so much ? Or were those men comparatively few in number and not always the most influential men in the Church ?

V.—I do not know.

A.—But you know, don't you, that very early the breach between the synagogue and the Christian Church became accentuated, so that the Christian could no longer preach in the synagogues. What happened then ? Did Churches continue to multiply just as before ?

V.—They certainly multiplied among the Gentiles.

A.—In spite of the fact that they could no longer be called " off-shoots of the local synagogue," as a missionary Bishop once called St. Paul's Churches ?

V.—Yes, in spite of that.

A.—Then may I not conclude that St. Paul relied upon neither the Jewish Christians nor Gentile proselytes, but upon something else to maintain and advance the true standard of doctrine and morals in the Church ? Or must I add further argument ?

V.—I do not know what further arguments you could adduce.

A.—Let us see. I suggested to you a moment ago that the Judaizers must have used some rational argument to bring the Gentiles under the law.

V.—Yes. You suggested that they must have taught that the law was the law kept by Christ and confirmed by Him, and that His followers must keep it because He kept it, and apparently told them to keep it.

A.—And did you not agree ?

V.—I agreed that they certainly might have used that argument.

A.—And to whom would that argument most strongly appeal : to the Jewish Christians and the God-fearing Greeks who had already accepted the law, or to the Gentile converts who had never been attracted by the law sufficiently strongly to become proselytes ?

V.—I suppose to the Jewish and God-fearing.

A.—Then you think that these classes would be most likely to accept the teaching of the Judaizers ?

V.—I do.

A.—And St. Paul was opposed to the Judaizers ?

V.—Plainly.

A.—And he writes as if there were grave danger of his converts submitting to the teaching of the Judaizers?

V.—Yes.

A.—Then were not those converts from the synagogue rather a source of danger than a source of strength in this controversy? How, then, could St. Paul naturally rely upon them? The converted Jews were of the same race as the Judaizers, and had been born under the law; the God-fearing had already submitted. They were the people who would feel least difficulty in acknowledging the truth of the Judaizers' argument.

V.—There may be something in that, but still I do not think it very convincing.

A.—You mean that you think the Gentile converts would be more ready to accept Jewish claims than the Jewish converts.

V.—No; I do not. I do not think either would easily have submitted.

A.—Yet you agreed with me that St. Paul wrote as if there were grave danger.

V.—So I did; but I really do not know what to say about it.

A.—Well, let us consider the matter in this way. St. Paul relied upon the presence of these converts from the synagogue to maintain the standard of doctrine and morality. You said that, didn't you? Your position was that St. Paul's practice was impossible to-day because we had no such converts upon whom to rely. Is not that what you said?

V.—Yes, that is the great difference between his day and ours.

A.—May I say, then, that if there had been no converts from the synagogue St. Paul would have agreed that the Christian Gentiles must be protected by the hedge of the law?

V.—No, certainly not. St. Paul's argument was that men were not to be saved by obedience to law, but by faith in Christ. It does not make the smallest difference to his

argument whether there were or were not Jews and God-fearing Greeks in his Churches.

A.—Do you mean that he would have spoken and acted exactly as he did, had there been no Jews or God-fearing Greeks in his Churches? I thought you said that it was the presence of those men which made all the difference, and that we cannot follow his practice now because there are no Jews or God-fearing Greeks in the Churches which we found.

V.—You do not understand. We must have trained men on whom we can rely to maintain some standard. St. Paul found those men in the synagogue. That is all that I mean.

A.—And did not find them outside the synagogue?

V.—I should hardly like to say that.

A.—But, surely, you must say that, if you are to maintain your position; because otherwise it is possible that we might find them outside the synagogue to-day, and that you say we cannot do.

V.—Well, anyhow, we do not. That is the only thing that matters.

A.—Perhaps we do not know, because we have never tried. But did St. Paul rely upon the training of the synagogue at all?

V.—Surely he did that. The Jews and God-fearing Greeks brought into the Church a well established standard of faith and morals which the Gentile converts sorely lacked. You can hardly deny that.

A.—You mean that these men first learned the discipline of the law, and then, being themselves established in character by that discipline, could accept the liberty of the gospel without danger, and could maintain a standard in the Church.

V.—Yes, that is what I mean.

A.—How does that differ from saying that for morality of life Moses with his law is a better and more effective teacher than Christ? Is it not the same as saying that when men have learned the fundamental ideas of morality and of the Unity and Holiness of God from Moses, then they can accept the faith of Christ without danger; but

that the faith of Christ and the teaching of Christ and the grace of Christ and the gift of the Holy Spirit, are not sufficiently powerful by themselves to do what the stern discipline of law alone can do ?

V.—I cannot say that. I do not believe it. Faith in Christ's grace and His gift of the Holy Spirit are far more strong foundations for purity of life than any law. How can I say that Moses is a better teacher than Christ ?

A.—But if that is so, it is possible to begin with faith in Christ and to rely solely upon Christ, even if there has been no previous discipline under the law. Does not that follow ? And is not that precisely the position which St. Paul took up ? Did he not teach that for salvation of soul and body in this life and in the life to come, Christ is the only Saviour, and that faith in Him is the only way, and that any trust in the law is vain ?

V.—That is, I think, what he taught.

A.—Then he did not rely upon the discipline of the law, nor did he rely upon the teaching of the synagogue to save the standard of morality in his Churches. Whether his converts came from the synagogue or from the heathen world outside, he taught them that they must regard their past ideas as vain, and learn of Christ and of Christ alone, and follow and obey Him, and Him alone ? Do you agree ?

V.—Yes ; I agree.

A.—May I conclude, then, that this assertion that St. Paul's method depended on the presence of proselytes and Jews in his Churches is of no force at all ; but is the flat contradiction of his teaching, and would have horrified him ?

V.—I do not see how it can be avoided. But you must not forget that he preached for the most part to civilized people. Who can tell whether he would have run such risks if he had been face to face with people like those with whom we have to deal in many parts of the world, in Africa, for instance, men with no civilized history behind them, or outcaste tribes in India ? There he simply could not have established Churches as he did in Galatia or in Macedonia.

A.—Why not ?

V.—Because the people are too degraded.

A.—When we hear modern missionaries speaking of their work I do not remember that they ever distinguish in that way. Do they generally say that in dealing with civilized races like the Japanese or the Chinese, they can follow the principles and practice of St. Paul because these nations are civilized, but in dealing with outcaste Indians or Africans they cannot follow his example because the people are degraded and uncivilized? Have you ever heard them say anything of that kind?

V.—No, I cannot say that I have.

A.—Would it be possible for them to say it?

V.—No, they could not say it, because we make no such distinction in our action. We follow the same practice everywhere.

A.—But you said that we could not follow the Apostolic practice because to-day the people to whom we go are not as civilized and enlightened as the people to whom St. Paul went. Don't you think that the peoples of the Far East would feel insulted if they heard this answer, that they are more degraded than the provincials of Macedonia and of Achaia and of Asia Minor under the Roman Empire? Do you think they would like it?

V.—I never thought of that. I was thinking of uncivilized people in Africa, and I said so.

A.—You did, and I understood you. All that I wanted to do was to suggest that that answer is not a true one. If it were true we should be compelled to make distinctions which we do not make in our Mission practice. May I say that whatever the true reason may be, that is not the reason why we do not follow the Apostle?

V.—As far as the civilized people are concerned, you may say so; but as for the uncivilized and degraded, it may still be true, that if St. Paul had to deal with them he could not have founded Churches as he did in the Roman Empire.

A.—Upon what foundation did he build? Did he build on the foundation of the intellectual and social enlightenment of the people to whom he went? Did he rely upon

that any more than he relied upon the training which the law had given to Jews and proselytes ?

V.—No, I do not think that he did that. But still, just think of the conditions in outcaste Indian villages and in African kraals !

A.—I am thinking of them. I am prepared to admit anything, however bad, that may be said of them. But I am thinking of St. Paul's principles : circumstances do not alter principles. And was not his principle that Christ sufficed to meet all conditions ?

V.—No doubt ; but there is a limit beyond which no man can go. Surely you recognize a praeparatio evangelica : the people to whom St. Paul went were prepared by a long discipline under law, so that their moral and religious sense was cultivated. What Africa needs is a like preparation. I have heard missionaries say that what Africans need is a long discipline under the terrors of the moral law, then they might be prepared to receive the Gospel ; but as it is they have had no moral training to keep them straight. To talk about Pauline principles in such a case is mere folly.

A.—I, too, have heard them say that ; but is it true ? I have heard others speak very differently ; but I do not want to weigh authority against authority on this subject. That would be an endless and futile task. What you and I want to consider is, what is the truth of the Gospel. And we agreed, did we not, that Christ is a better foundation on which to build than Moses ?

V.—Yes, we did.

A.—And shall we not agree that when missionaries of the Gospel go to any people, it is because in the providence of God the time has come for them to go ?

V.—That is certain.

A.—And can missionaries of the Gospel be missionaries of anything but the Gospel ?

V.—Certainly not.

A. —Then in the providence of God the time has come for these people to hear the Gospel.

V.—Plainly.

A.—Then it is of Christ that they must hear, not of the law; for the law is not the Gospel.

V.—Well.

A.—And moral advance must spring from faith in Christ and obedience to Him, not from fear of the law.

V.—Well.

A.—You say, "Well," but what do you really mean; do you mean that in the case of these degraded people the indwelling Christ is to be put first as the foundation of all, and not some external control?

V.—I really do not know what to say. It seems a fearful risk.

A.—Do you agree with me that St. Paul's principle that the indwelling Christ is the one and only hope for men would have forced him to act in Africa to-day as he did in Macedonia and in Galatia twenty centuries ago, or do you think that he would have said that he could apply that doctrine in Galatia and Macedonia, but that in Africa external control was unavoidable? Is his doctrine one which could so change?

V.—Well, he might have done it; but we cannot venture so far.

A.—Why not, if indeed we believe in Christ?

V.—It is all very well to believe in Christ; we all do that; but to say that Africans can do without control from us, that is going too far. Didn't I tell you long ago that we are sent to control, and must control?

A.—Now you are explaining why our practice is identical in principle in the Far East and in Africa; for if we believe that we must rely upon our control to save our converts, and if we teach our converts to rely upon our control, that can be applied universally. They are all new-born Christians, and we can easily be afraid for them all, and see at once that they all alike need our control.

V.—That is right. You see that at last.

A.—Do you remember that, when I asked you why the Judaizers acted as they did, you answered that they obviously wanted the Jew to be top dog in the Church, and converts from the heathen to be admitted only so far

as they followed Jewish rules of life. You are not afraid that our converts may one day say that of us?

V.—Some of them say it now; they accuse us of importing Western forms and civilization, and of keeping them down; but it is absurdly false. We do nothing of the kind. Our one care is for their progress and stability.

A.—Did not the Judaizers say that, or might they not have said that, and yet you, looking at their work from this distance, said at once that it was plain that they were working to maintain the supremacy of the Jews in the Church, and to keep all Gentile converts in the position of proselytes? Have those natives who accuse us of keeping them down no reason or excuse?

V.—No excuse whatever. It is perfectly manifest to any impartial observer that we use our control solely for their uplift, and have no idea whatever of maintaining our supremacy, or of keeping them down. It is absurd and wicked to suggest such a notion.

A.—Yet our converts say it. It is strange.

The Survey Series

THE TASK OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH: A World Survey. Edited by Thomas Cochrane, M.B., C.M.

This book reveals the world task of the Christian Church by reviewing in a concise yet arresting manner the position and prospects of Christianity to-day in practically every country of the world. Royal 8vo, 144 pages, cloth boards, gilt lettered. Price 7/6; by Post, 8/-

THE CHALLENGE OF CENTRAL ASIA. With Map.
Price 6d. (post paid, 7d.)

INSULINDE: A brief Survey of the Dutch East Indies. With Map.
Price 6d. (post paid, 7d.)

A BIRD'S-EYE VIEW OF LATIN AMERICA. With Map.
Price 6d. (post paid, 7d.)

THE LAND OF THE VANISHED CHURCH: A Survey of North Africa. By J. J. Cooksey. With Map. Price 2/- (post paid, 2/3)

A GREAT EMANCIPATION: A Survey of Nyasaland. By W. J. W. Roome. Price 1/- (post paid, 1/2). With Map, 4/- (post paid, 4/3)

OTHERS WILL FOLLOW

Indigenous Church Series

THE INDIGENOUS CHURCH. By S. J. W. Clark. Shoals of letters of appreciation have been received, and their contents could be summarized in the words of one which says: "'The Indigenous Church' should be read by every missionary in the world."
Price 4d. (post paid, 5d.)

THE FIRST STAGE IN THE CHRISTIAN OCCUPATION OF RURAL CHINA. By S. J. W. Clark. Price 3d. (post paid, 4d.)

CHURCH PLANTING. By S. G. Peill and W. F. Rowlands.
Price 4d. (post paid, 5d.)

INDIGENOUS IDEALS IN PRACTICE. By W. F. Rowlands.
Price 6d. (post paid, 7d.)

THE WAY TO WIN THE WHOLE WORLD FOR CHRIST. By J. MacGowan. A powerful plea for widespread evangelism.
Price 4d. (post paid, 5d.)

EDUCATION IN THE NATIVE CHURCH. By Roland Allen. Contains a comparison of two opposed conceptions of the Native Church, and a comparison of the divergent conceptions of Christian Education which spring from each. Price 6d. (post paid, 7d.)

OTHERS WILL FOLLOW

PB-07931
5-49
C

337409

BV2063 .A4
Allen, Roland, 1869-1947.
The establishment of the church in the

BV
2063
A4
Allen, Roland, 1869-1947.
The establishment of the church in the mission field; a critical dialogue. London, World Dominion Press [n.d.]
31p. 25cm. (Indigenous church series)

1. Missions--Theory. I. Title.

337409

CCSC/ej

PERMA-BOUND